

SUBJECT: MONMOUTHSHIRE LOCAL TOILETS STRATEGY – review of current strategy and progress report

MEETING: Place Scrutiny Committee

DATE: 14th March 2024

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: All

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To scrutinise progress on implementing the actions identified in Monmouthshire County Council's Local Toilets Strategy, prior to updating the Cabinet Member and Welsh Government.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To comment on progress against actions identified in this Authority's Local Toilets Strategy provided in **Appendix Two**, (amendments to the last version presented to this Committee in January 2023 are provided in red text).
- 2.2 Any Member comments or amendments are incorporated into the updated strategy prior to submission for Individual Cabinet Member Decision. After receipt of Cabinet Member approval, the report author to advise Welsh Government of amendments to the original strategy and publishes the updated Local Toilet Strategy 2024.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017 'Provision of Toilets' came into force on 31st May 2018. It placed a duty on each local authority in Wales to prepare and publish a local toilet strategy for its area by 31st May 2019. Welsh Government (WG) also require a 'progress update' report to be submitted to them to ensure actions are progressed. Progress has been reported to scrutiny committees since April 2021 and now a formal review needs to be submitted to WG. This Authority needs to advise WG of actions taken, any outstanding matters and report any future planning on local toilet provision.
- 3.2 Local authorities in Wales have the responsibility to –
- Assess the need for toilet provision for their communities
 - Plan to meet those needs
 - Produce a local toilets strategy, and
 - Review, update and publicise revisions to the strategy.

- 3.3 The duty to prepare a local toilets strategy does not require local authorities to provide and maintain public toilets directly. Indeed, further to the work of the 'Public Convenience Working Group' in 2009, many public toilet blocks were successfully transferred to Town and Community Councils to manage. It is for the County Council to take a strategic view on how publicly accessible toilets can be provided and accessed across the county.
- 3.4 The draft strategy came to the Strong Communities Select Committee on 21st May 2019 for pre-decision scrutiny. The final draft incorporated opinions expressed via (1) a public survey, that ran between 19th December 2018 and 11th January 2019, and (2) a public consultation open from 22nd February to 3rd May 2019. Also referenced were comments from Gwent Police and Abergavenny Town Council's own survey from the summer of 2018.
- 3.5 Monmouthshire's Local Toilet Strategy was approved by Individual Cabinet Member Decision on 12th June 2019, and subsequently published. This has been updated to reflect changes over the last (close to) five years and lists all the current public toilet blocks, (18), half of which are owned by Town and Community Councils, with the other half still owned by this Authority. This provision is supplemented by publicly accessible toilets in other buildings, including leisure centres, libraries and museums.
- 3.6 At the January 2023 Place Scrutiny Committee Members asked for responses on a number of matters. The Head of Public Protection, in consultation with various other MCC Officers, provided responses to each query in a written reply, shared with committee members, on 6th April 2023. This is provided as **Appendix One**. This attachment also provides updates on activity and progress since April 2023, as provided in red text.
- 3.7 Landlord Services, since the last published Toilet Strategy in 2019, have undertaken repair works in 12 toilet blocks, improving those facilities structurally to ensure customer safety and health. This year 2023/24 five blocks were repaired, 2 in Abergavenny, 2 in Chepstow and one in Tintern.
- 3.8 Our cleaning staff should be commended for continuing to provide clean facilities across the publicly available toilet blocks where they provide this service. This assists in maintaining footfall in our towns, open spaces and villages by providing safe, clean and free to use public toilets.
- 3.9 Since the April 2023 update, Members at Full Council in December 2023 wanted to pursue the provision of sanitary bins in male toilets, noting the need for those with incontinence or other health needs to assist in safe and dignified disposal. To this end, (and noting the request covered 'all MCC workplaces' which falls outside of the scope of this public toilet strategy), MCC will need to review existing sanitary bin provision in all toilets – female and disabled provision – and determine what is needed in addition to this to cater for men. All Town and Community Councils with responsibility for public toilets have been contacted to support the 'Boys Need Bins' national campaign.
- 3.10 Wales Seniors Forum (WSF) contacted all Welsh Local Authorities in February 2024 regarding on-going strategy reviews. WSF are of the view that public toilets are essential

for any local authority that would like to be truly age friendly. A reply was provided by the Head of Public Protection advising of the annual scrutiny of the strategy's key actions, and on-going Member engagement. Reference was also made to this Authority's ambition to achieve 'Age Friendly Community' status, (a public consultation is currently in place). One of the criteria for this World Health Organisation's status refers to 'outdoor spaces and buildings meet the needs of older people'. The provision of free, accessible public toilets would contribute to this element. Any feedback regarding public toilet provision can be fed back to inform our Local Toilet Strategy.

4. INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT, (includes equality, future generations, social justice, safeguarding and corporate parenting):

4.1 An updated 'Integrated Impact Assessment' (IIA) form is provided as **Appendix Three**, attached.

4.2 The process of compiling this Authority's Local Toilet Strategy provided an assessment of the current toilet provision and had regard to the input from the public survey, Gwent Police and other partners. Key actions have been undertaken, and the strategy will continue to be monitored and reviewed with partners. Overall, with actions implemented, the strategy will have a very positive impact on our residents and visitors to the county. Public provision has been maintained or improved, access information provided, encouraging people to take exercise and stay more physically active. The IIA was updated further to Member comments in January 2023, for example, to include reference to 'Changing Places' facilities.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL:

5.1 Producing a Local Toilet Strategy is a statutory duty, as required under Part 8 of the Public Health (Wales) Act 2017. This Authority must advise WG of progress against actions highlighted in its' local toilet strategy and publish any significant changes to the content. After pre-decision comments and approval by the Cabinet Member, the strategy will be refreshed and published as an updated version. This will then be shared on our website bilingually.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA:

6.1 A progress report setting out the steps taken as a consequence of the strategy will be produced annually and will be scrutinised by this Committee. An evaluation of cleanliness, overall provision, mapping of locations, etc. will be regularly carried out with facility providers, including Town and Community Councils.

6.2 The key actions are provided in Section 15 of the strategy and progress will be monitored against the actions specified to ensure the strategy is effective.

7. REASONS:

- 7.1 The preparation and publication of an up-to-date Local Toilet Strategy is a legal requirement, as outlined in Section 3 of the strategy.
- 7.2 It is important to incorporate any further comments by Members prior to approval of the updated 2024 strategy.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 Providing the strategy and reviewing progress has involved significant Officer time. As per 6.1 of the strategy – Appendix Two – Officers from Public Protection, Facilities, Landlord Services, Finance, MonLife, Policy & Development, Communications and Shared Resources Service have all contributed. Landlord Services have an annual repair programme to ensure standards are maintained in the traditional toilet blocks across the county. Environmental Health undertake annual inspections of all the publicly accessible blocks.
- 8.2 The one-off Welsh Government grant of £17,200 was transferred to Landlord Services in 2023/24.

9. CONSULTEES:

Chief Officer – Social Care & Health
Landlord Services
Facilities Supervisor

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Monmouthshire County Council's initial Local Toilet Strategy, June 2019

9. AUTHOR:

David H Jones, Head of Public Protection

10. CONTACT DETAILS:

Tel: 01633 644100

E-mail: davidjones3@monmouthshire.gov.uk

Appendices

Appendix One – Summary of actions taken, further to those identified by Members at last Place Scrutiny in January 2023 & the ten original actions with associated progress.

Appendix Two – Monmouthshire CC's Local Toilets Strategy, (original June 2019), updated March 2024

Appendix Three – Integrated Impact Assessment, March 2024